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President: Mr. Razali Ismail ..... (Malaysia)

The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.

Agenda item 9 (*continued*)

General debate

The President: I call first on the Minister of State and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Romania, His Excellency Mr. Teodor Viorel Melescanu.

Mr. Melescanu (Romania) (*interpretation from French*): I have the particular pleasure of congratulating you, Sir, on your election as President of the fifty-first session of the General Assembly and of expressing our satisfaction at seeing in such a high position the representative of a country and a region so widely appreciated for their traditions and dynamism. I am convinced that your experience and your qualities as an eminent diplomat will facilitate the proceedings and the successful outcome of this session. I would like also to express our thanks to your predecessor, Mr. Diogo Freitas do Amaral of Portugal, for the able manner in which he directed the previous session of the General Assembly.

Allow me to take this opportunity to express our high appreciation for the remarkable activity carried out with such dedication since 1992 by the Secretary-General, Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, to the benefit of the United Nations.

The Assembly has gathered again not only to review recent regional and world developments or to survey last year's results, but also to discuss especially the prospects and challenges we are facing at the threshold of the twenty-first century.

We are essentially called upon to reflect and act jointly on establishing an international system that can guarantee security, stability, progress and prosperity for all. The United Nations is certainly the pillar of such a system. The conclusion of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, which we have just signed, is proof of this. We are among those who consider that we now have a historic opportunity to insure world security and stability through the establishment of democratic institutions, sustainable development, respect for human rights and social justice. This requires better international cooperation and a new spirit of partnership among all countries.

Romania intends to contribute to this common effort through consolidation of its achievements in the building of a new democratic society based on the rule of law, respect for human rights and a market economy, with a view to establishing itself as a stabilizing factor in the region.

In referring to some of the significant events of the past year, I will recall that our macro-economic policy and the progress we have made in the establishment of institutions adapted to a market economy have led to a steady improvement of economic performance. The private sector has become preponderant in our gross domestic product. In order to overcome the difficulties of

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transition and to prepare for integration into the European Union, Romania has received substantial assistance from the European Union and its members. The United States has granted Romania permanent most favoured nation status. My country has become a full member of the Central European Initiative and next year will become part of the Central European free trade agreement. The signing of a Treaty of Understanding, Cooperation and Good-Neighbourliness between Romania and Hungary was a significant event not only for our historic reconciliation, but also for stability in Central Europe.

I would also like to take note of my country's active participation in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's Partnership for Peace programme and in the Implementation Forces operation in Bosnia and Herzegovina. These strengthen our belief that a favourable decision will be taken on our integration into the Atlantic Alliance.

At the subregional level, Romania supported the measures aimed at the advancement of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation and of the process of stability and good-neighbourly relations in south-east Europe, which is also the subject of initiatives by the European Union and the United States. Aware of the importance of the democratization process, the Romanian Government has decided to host the third International Conference on New or Restored Democracies in Bucharest in early September 1997.

All these developments and initiatives testify to my country's willingness to act as a credible and responsible partner in international affairs and as a stabilizing factor and source of security in Europe and the world.

On the occasion of the commemorative meeting held on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the entry into force of the Charter of United Nations, numerous heads of State — including the President of Romania — pointed out that the Organization can and should play a greater role in international relations in order to respond more effectively to global challenges. It is becoming increasingly evident that we are at a point in history when numerous problems have to be reconsidered from a global perspective if we are to forge a common vision wherein the individual is the focus of our policies. The main problem to be solved at the dawn of the third millennium is finding the appropriate synthesis between the general aspiration to universality and the individual aspiration to identity.

The series of major global conferences organized by the United Nations over these past five years have led to a new integrated concept of sustainable development focused on the human being.

Now that we are in the process of revitalizing, strengthening and reforming the United Nations system, including a limited enlargement of the Security Council, we consider it timely and useful to capitalize on these achievements. It would also be desirable to agree on an integrated common vision of development and on a list of priorities that would inspire and guide the general process of renewal of the United Nations. By acting in this way, we will be able to facilitate our current objective, as long as the working groups established by the General Assembly hasten their achievement of balanced and realistic results.

Along with the other Member States, Romania also considers that the moment has come to proceed to an expansion of the membership of the Security Council, both in the category of permanent members — for which Germany and Japan are preeminently qualified by their importance in international affairs — as in the category of non-permanent members. This should be done through an agreed formula, based on proposals already put forward, such as the Italian, which represents a good basis for ensuring that an increased number of States — including those of central and eastern Europe — be represented in the Council. In short, a special meeting of the General Assembly should be called on the results of the reform of the United Nations system.

Having made these general remarks, I would like to make a few comments on particular issues of our agenda.

First, with regard to crisis and conflict management, it is clearly and primarily the responsibility of the parties directly involved to put an end to conflict and to restore peace and security. We underscore the importance we attach to dialogue as a means of reaching negotiated solutions by the parties directly concerned.

We will contribute to the establishment of normal relations and the full implementation of the Dayton Agreement among the countries of the former Yugoslavia, including the lifting of the sanctions against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. We welcomed with interest the initiatives on the economic reconstruction of the region and are fully prepared to take an active part in this process, including through joint cooperation projects with neighbouring countries.

We express our deep concern over the recent worrying developments in the Middle East peace process which are the object of Security Council resolution 1073 (1996). We welcome the United States initiative aimed at the resumption of negotiations between the parties on the basis of the principles agreed upon in Madrid and Oslo, as they represent the only way to build a just and lasting peace. Romania recognizes the necessity of strengthening regional economic cooperation in support of the peace process in the Middle East and is actively involved in the multilateral working groups.

We are still concerned about the ongoing, complex and uncertain situation in the eastern part of the Republic of Moldova and we reaffirm the necessity for an unconditional and orderly withdrawal of foreign troops from the Transdniester region.

We accord due attention to all initiatives aimed at any process that could lead to a lasting peace in the Korean peninsula and in other regions of tension and conflict.

As the main guarantor of international peace and security, the United Nations should participate more actively in the prevention and management of crises by employing flexible peace instruments, including preventive diplomacy and peace-keeping operations. The experience gained by contributing States — including Romania, particularly as a result of its significant participation in the United Nations peace-keeping Mission in Angola — highlights the necessity of increasing rapid-reaction capacity by improving the standby system and other measures aimed at the rapid deployment of new peace-keeping operations and the efficient management of current ones.

With regard to sanctions, Romania, which has been deeply affected by the strict implementation of economic sanctions, especially in the case of the former Yugoslavia, believes that the United Nations should play a larger role in the process of compensating third countries so that the efficiency and credibility of Security Council actions in this area can be preserved.

Secondly, I would like to make some comments in connection with non-proliferation, arms control and disarmament. As a party to the process since its inception, Romania welcomed with satisfaction the adoption of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty. This major step represents a crucial stage in the fulfilment of one of the main objectives in the implementation of relevant obligations of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. The establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones in South-East Asia, the Pacific and Africa is aimed at the same objective.

Romania will continue to contribute to the promotion of the review process of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, both before the next Review Conference in the year 2000, the preparatory committee of which will convene in 1997. We will also give equal attention to the speedy commencement of negotiations on a treaty banning the production of fissile materials, as well as to the implementation of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and On Their Destruction and the establishment of an efficient verification mechanism.

We again invite all States to consider establishing a code of conduct for conventional arms transfers which will increase transparency and confidence among States in that field.

Romania supports all efforts leading to the total ban of anti-personnel mines. To this end, in 1995, the Romanian Government declared a moratorium, which will be extended this year, and has begun the ratification procedures of the additional Protocols to the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons.

My third and last thought relates to the economic and social areas, where we believe there are good prospects for the adoption of the Agenda for Development. Romania endorses the idea that the United Nations can and should contribute to implementing a new global partnership for development among developing countries, developed countries and multilateral institutions. We noted with interest the inclusion of this concept in the economic communiqué adopted at the recent Group of Seven summit meeting in Lyon, as well as the recognition of the fact that the new partnership should be beneficial to all and based on a spirit of solidarity that will distribute responsibility among all partners.

Within this framework, the United Nations and its institutions should pursue reform and adjustment efforts with a view to improving their performance in the building of consensus in the area of development. We welcome the results of the ninth session of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development in

Midrand as an essential step in its renewal. The session paved the way for the reform of its intergovernmental structure, and the reorientation of its priorities in order to develop cooperation with the World Trade Organization and the Bretton Woods financial institutions. This will lead to the integration of developing countries and countries in transition into the global commercial and financial system.

We also note the measures recently taken to strengthen the Economic and Social Council's central role in establishing and coordinating joint policies, as well as the initiatives of the Economic Commission for Europe and other regional Commissions in redefining their priorities.

The Economic and Social Council has the responsibility to ensure the follow-up to the major international conferences. We will work together in preparing the 1997 special session of the General Assembly in order to improve the implementation of agreements reached on environmental protection at the Rio Conference and at the Vienna regional conference on the review of the Social Summit in Copenhagen. It is worth mentioning that a subregional conference recently held in Bucharest provided a useful evaluation of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action on the status of women in Central and Eastern Europe.

We support the United Nations fight against the abuse of drugs and illicit drug trafficking, including all forms of related crimes. We intend to participate in the preparations of the 1998 special session of the General Assembly devoted to this scourge.

The international community must also be mobilized to confront the rapid rise in transnational organized crime and terrorism. We encourage more active participation on the part of the United Nations. In this respect, we welcome the proposal put forward here last week by President Kwasniewski of Poland.

Development assistance requires a new and better response from the international community in the promotion of our common objective of sustainable and socially equitable growth focused on the human being and on the protection of the environment. Aid flows should be more efficient and directed towards the countries in real need. Romania maintains good cooperation with the United Nations Development Programme and its resident representative in Bucharest, other funds and development programmes — including the United Nations Population Fund and the United Nations Children's Fund — and with the specialized agencies and the Bretton Woods institutions. We insure that the assistance we receive is used for structural reforms, and macroeconomic stabilization and that it likewise contributes to the creation of favourable conditions for the expansion of a dynamic and competitive private sector.

Finally, I wish to reaffirm my country's deep commitment to the universal nature of human rights and fundamental freedoms, the promotion and observance of which represent a priority for the United Nations.

In view of this premise, the Romanian Government condemns any form of discrimination and intolerance, especially aggressive nationalism, and intends to guarantee the free and equal exercise of human rights, including the rights of women, children and persons belonging to national minorities. We support the efforts of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, as overall coordinator of the specialized bodies within the United Nations system in improving the efficiency of the Centre for Human Rights.

The best guarantee for the observance of human rights lies in developing democracy. This component of the "democracy-development-peace" triad brings me to a final reflection about the United Nations contribution to the process of worldwide democratization. By convening in Bucharest, in September 1997, the third International Conference on New or Restored Democracies, we wish to continue the dialogue and the sharing of experience in building democratic societies by contributing the experiences of Romania, a country in Central Europe that is reviving, irreversibly, its best democratic traditions after so many years of dictatorship.

I wish to assure the Assembly that my country will do its best, in concert with all interested countries, to enable the United Nations — the guarantor of peace and international legality — to respond more efficiently to the problems we all share.

The President: The next speaker is the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Lao People's Democratic Republic, His Excellency Mr. Somsavat Lengsavad.

Mr. Lengsavad (Lao People's Democratic Republic) (*spoke in Laotian; interpretation from French text furnished by the delegation*): At the outset, I wish to express my pleasure at seeing you, Sir, assume the presidency of the fifty-first session of the General Assembly. Your election to this very responsible post attests to the important role of your country, Malaysia, a

country with which the Lao People's Democratic Republic has excellent relations of friendship and cooperation in many areas. Aware of your outstanding competence and your qualities as an experienced diplomat, I am convinced that this session's proceedings will be crowned with brilliant success.

I also wish on this occasion to express my sincere appreciation to Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali, for the outstanding work he has accomplished during his five years in office in the service of the nations and peoples of the world.

The strengthening of cooperation for development among peoples that we have seen in recent years reflects the general trend throughout the world. In various regions, however, we must sadly note the persistence of complex situations and tensions arising from bloody ethnic conflicts and religious differences.

Even more serious, we are witnessing interference in the internal affairs of States. Hegemonic policies are targeted against small States through arbitrary economic blockades, which constitute new forms of racism and slavery. This threatens and could destroy harmonious coexistence among States and peoples. The entire international community must work even harder to find ways and means to solve these problems as soon as possible. This is no easy task. We must all be patient and resolute. If we work together, keeping equity and justice in our sights as we have done many times, we believe that we can reach our ultimate goals.

In Europe, the Dayton Peace Agreement signed on 14 December 1995 to address the problems of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the recent ensuing elections, marked an important stage in the search for a solution to the distressing and destructive conflict in that country. We appeal to all parties concerned to show maximum restraint and objectivity in their sincere and rigorous implementation of the commitments made, in order to restore peace, stability and cooperation in that region.

In South Africa, under the resolute guidance of President Mandela, the South African people are trying to overcome the aftermath of apartheid and rebuild the beloved country. We pay tribute to the new South African authorities for their determination and courage, and hope that South Africa and its courageous people will enjoy every success in these difficult undertakings.

In the countries of the Caribbean, economic cooperation and cultural and other relations have continued to develop in accordance with the current international climate, thereby enhancing peace and security in that part of the world. Given this logical course of events, we hope that the United States of America will adopt a more reasonable position in its efforts to solve the ongoing problem with the Republic of Cuba through sincere dialogue in order to respond to the legitimate interests of the two peoples and help promote understanding between the two countries.

In the Middle East, following the establishment of the Palestinian Authority in accordance with the Washington peace accord signed in 1993, the peace process was a source of great hope. But recently it has run into difficulties. Events last week in Jerusalem further compound the situation. We are deeply concerned at the situation and the Government of Laos hopes that the coming meeting between leaders of the parties to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict will help normalize the situation so that the commitments they made can be respected in the interest of peace and cooperation in the region and throughout the world.

On the Korean peninsula, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the United States are rightly continuing to implement agreements reached, thereby helping consolidate peace in the region. We welcome this situation, and the Government and the people of Laos express their full support for the deep-seated aspirations of the Korean people for a situation in which a new war becomes impossible and the peaceful reunification of Korea can take place on the basis of dialogue and new, suitable mechanisms that can turn aims into reality.

In South-East Asia, a movement towards peace and cooperation has gathered strength. Recently, in Malaysia, representatives of the countries of the region discussed a planned railroad from Asia to Europe, from Singapore towards China via Laos. This project would enhance cooperation in the region. With this in mind, the countries of the region are trying to work together to solve their problems by peaceful means in accordance with regional realities. By remaining true to their policies of peaceful coexistence and security in the interests of development, these countries, including the Lao People's Democratic Republic, have signed a treaty on the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free-zone in South-East Asia. This historic event is their major contribution. The Government of the Lao People's Democratic Republic believes that the adoption of the Comprehensive

Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty by the fiftieth session of the General Assembly is a sign of the immeasurable success of efforts made by the international community to bring about the gradual elimination of nuclear weapons throughout the world.

In the Lao People's Democratic Republic, the economic reform that began in 1986 has borne its first fruits for our people. Average annual economic growth over the past five years, from 1991 to 1995, stands at approximately 6.4 per cent. The inflation rate is generally stable, thereby helping gradually to raise the living standards of the multi-ethnic Lao populations. What we have accomplished has helped maintain political stability and social harmony. This was why, during its congress last March, the Lao People's Revolutionary Party gave an exhaustive account of socio-economic development and decided to continue reform unremittingly on the basis of a market economy. It also decided to aim for average annual national economic growth of 8 to 8.5 per cent and a per capita income of $500 per year by the year 2000. Currently, our Government is encouraging the various economic sectors to develop and is helping foreigners invest in the potential of the country with a view to laying down material and technical foundations that can help the country say goodbye to underdevelopment by the year 2020. This is a major and arduous task which the Government will work hard to fulfil.

In its foreign relations, the Government of the Lao People's Democratic Republic intends to continue its policy of peace, independence, friendship and cooperation with all countries and international and non-governmental organizations. For now, it will focus its efforts on preparing the conditions necessary for us to be able to join the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) in 1997. This will enable the country to develop along the general lines of other countries in the region and throughout the world. We are pleased that Cambodia and Myanmar have indicated that they too wish to join ASEAN.

Positive developments are taking place in the international economic situation. Some countries are showing signs of progress. However, there have been no indications that the world economy will make a speedy and lasting recovery. Increased interdependence and globalization in the international economy have both provided new opportunities and caused new tensions and imbalances, and have, in particular, increased the marginalization of developing countries. The entire international community must act together to ensure that there will be a more favourable and more equitable international economic environment in which developing countries can effectively wage their struggle against poverty in order to achieve progress throughout their societies.

The right to decent housing for all is essential in guaranteeing stability and sound development in the socio-economic sphere. We are therefore pleased to note the accomplishments of the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements, held in June at Istanbul. The Lao People's Democratic Republic is also pleased to note the positive results achieved at the ninth United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, which took place last May in Midrand, South Africa.

Recently, the World Congress against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children, held in Stockholm, Sweden, seriously considered the troubling situation in which every year, more than a million children throughout the world are victims of abusers of all sorts, and presented various measures to the international community to combat this new danger which threatens the future of the new generation. The Lao Government supports these efforts and is determined to implement them in every manner possible.

The problem of drug abuse continues to weigh heavily on the international community. Because of its globalization, this problem can be solved only through effective international cooperation founded on the principle of shared responsibility. In recent years, the Government of the Lao People's Democratic Republic has formulated a comprehensive programme for drug control through the year 2000, which consists in a gradual reduction in poppy cultivation through the implementation of integrated rural development projects. Given the seriousness of drugs in our society, we have recently amended our penal code and laid down more severe sentences for such offenses. We have achieved a certain number of satisfying results in implementing this programme, although a great deal remains to be done. With the cooperation and assistance of friendly countries and international and non-governmental organizations, we hope to be able to make even greater progress in the future, which will contribute to the international community's effort to eradicate this scourge from the face of the Earth.

The environment is one of the issues to which the international community attaches great importance. Developed and developing countries alike have a

sovereign, sacred right to exploit their natural resources. In exercising this fundamental right, sustained, economic growth must go hand in hand with environment protection, and vice versa. Environmental protection should in no way imply a rejection of economic development out of fear of damaging the environment. As the two pillars of lasting development in all countries, these concepts must be mutually reinforcing. It would be unwise, in our view, to emphasize one at the expense of the other. Only equal regard for these two aspects will guarantee the success of any development effort.

We live in a complex and still uncertain world. In this context, nations and peoples throughout the world accord great importance to the United Nations, the only universal multilateral forum for the consideration of world problems. In order to ensure that it can discharge its great duties, the institution needs to adapt itself to new world realities. In this vein, it is essential to affirm the role of the General Assembly, where all States are represented, as the United Nations system's principal organ for deliberation and decision-making. As for the Security Council, the Lao delegation believes that it should be restructured and made more democratic, and that there should be a limited expansion in the number of its permanent and non-permanent members according to equitable geographic distribution and taking into account the relative importance of the various countries. In an effort to achieve this goal, certain countries, such as Japan, Germany and India in particular, should become permanent members of the Security Council. The Security Council would thus be in a position to meet the legitimate aspirations of Member States, and particularly of the developing countries, which constitute the vast majority of nations on our planet. In this vein, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, in cooperation with other delegations, will spare no effort to positively contribute to the current efforts to strengthen our universal Organization.

Address by His Serene Highness Prince Albert, Crown Prince of the Principality of Monaco

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by His Serene Highness Crown Prince Albert, Crown Prince of the Principality of Monaco.

His Serene Highness, Crown Prince Albert, Crown Prince of the Principality of Monaco, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Serene Highness Crown Prince Albert, Crown Prince of the Principality of Monaco, to the United Nations and in inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Prince Albert (*interpretation from French*): It is a great pleasure for me, at this fifty-first session of the General Assembly, to congratulate you on your election. Your wealth of experience in international affairs, your professional skills and your great diplomatic qualities are, for me and my country, a guarantee that our work will be successful. I would like to include in these very sincere congratulations the other officers of the Assembly, whom we have just elected. I wish them all every success in the important and delicate tasks that lie ahead.

I should also like express our gratitude to and admiration for the President of the fiftieth session of the General Assembly, whose very successful term of office has just come to an end. He did sterling work in ensuring the prestige of the numerous and highly symbolic events that marked the fiftieth anniversary of this Organization. He gave great impetus to the extensive discussions within the General Assembly on strengthening the United Nations system and on the question of equitable representation on the and increase in the membership of the Security Council and other matters related to the Council. Suggestions were made by the delegation of Monaco with regard, notably, to the increase in the number of permanent and non-permanent members of the Council. They appear in annex 11 of the report of the working group established to that end.

I should also like to take this opportunity to thank the Secretary-General for his efforts to make our Organization less costly and more effective. In a particularly difficult political and economic situation, he has never failed in the mission we entrusted to him five years ago.

I referred just now to the difficulties of our times. These are major difficulties and often seem insurmountable, at least in the short term.

Many factors, sometimes very different but broadly connected, exacerbate these difficulties. The major world conferences on population and development, on social development and on human settlements clearly brought these factors to light.

If the sustainable and harmonious development we aspire to is to apply to all human beings, we must also try to preserve the resources of our planet so that future

generations do not find themselves totally destitute one day. In a vital area for us, the Principality of Monaco has been striving for nearly a century to promote the preservation of oceans and seas and the priceless resources they provide, through studies and research, but also by taking specific national and international initiatives. Accordingly, Monaco ratified the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea and intends in 1998 to play an active role, commensurate with our size and resources, during the International Year of the Ocean.

The General Assembly, five years after the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, wisely decided pursuant to resolution 50/113 to hold a special session to consider and review the implementation of Agenda 21. This will be an extremely important session. We hope it will give us an opportunity to reinforce the objectives spelt out at Rio de Janeiro in June 1992.

The Principality of Monaco is pleased to host next year's seventh session of the High-Level Advisory Board on Sustainable Development and then the International Whaling Commission.

My country is thus showing our interest in the international cooperation which is essential if we are to address the confrontation between legitimate economic development and protection of the environment and the non-renewal natural resources of our planet.

Other major concerns which seriously impede development remain. No continent is spared the tensions felt around the world, which pose a serious threat.

Our Organization does not always have the means needed to face up to these challenges and to the most alarming situations. Nevertheless, we welcomed the adoption of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, which is finally open for signature and which I will have the honour to sign during this session on behalf of the Principality of Monaco.

Mr. Urbizo Panting (Honduras), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Might I refer here to the major role played by the International Atomic Energy Agency which so ably and so carefully monitors compliance with the safeguards agreements concluded in the framework of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, which the Principality of Monaco has ratified. Together with this, the Agency very scrupulously seeks to apply, sometimes in very delicate circumstances, the decisions of the Security Council in this respect. Its responsibilities in the field of disarmament are very substantial. Monaco is therefore particularly proud to be the home of the Marine Environment Laboratory, which functions with the assistance of the United Nations Environment Programme and the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission. Furthermore, my delegation has been following very closely the follow-up to resolution 50/75, of which our Principality was one of the sponsors, and which the General Assembly adopted on 12 December 1995.

The strengthening of security and cooperation in the Mediterranean is of concern to us, as it is of concern to neighbouring friendly countries on both sides of the Sea. The Secretary-General has embarked on valuable consultations in this respect, and for this we thank him very sincerely.

When wars break out, once the weapons have fallen silent, the painful aftermath remains, including millions of landmines, which have a devastating, extremely deadly effect, scattered in fields and under roads and have a massive impact on civilian populations, primarily on children. At the human level, the proliferation of these devices causes serious, often incurable, mutilation and major material damage. The Security Council's 15 August 1996 discussions on demining in the context of peace-keeping operations highlighted, if there were any need to do so, the importance that the United Nations and the major Powers attach to this question. His Serene Highness, the Sovereign Prince of Monaco, my father, is no less mindful of this. He has requested his Government to provide regular financial assistance to demining operations by contributing to the fund set up by the United Nations for that purpose. Without offering an immediate, complete solution, a moratorium — or, even better, cessation — on the production and export of these anti-personnel landmines would give us some hope.

This year saw the holding of the twenty-sixth Olympic Games. Men and women from 197 countries and territories, from very different backgrounds, came together and tested their strength. They fought peacefully and, with mutual respect and esteem, created imperishable bonds. I was there as Chairman of the Monaco Olympic Committee and as a member of the International Olympic Committee, and I can attest to the unique spirit which every four years brings together the world's best athletes. I wish to pay tribute to them. They are an irreplaceable example for the young people of our nations. I think it is right, here, to echo the appeal made

by many organizations that there be more women representing their countries at the Olympic Games, and that traditions, however worthy of respect, do not become discrimination against women in the area of sport.

The cooperation that has grown up between the United Nations and the Olympic Movement, which share lofty universal principles and values, gives me great hope. Our General Assembly regularly bolsters this cooperation in its resolutions, and I hope that the same will happen this year.

These athletic, dynamic and devoted young people often work as volunteers for the United Nations and non-governmental humanitarian organizations, and they deserve our heartfelt gratitude.

I wish too to recall the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond, adopted last year by the General Assembly in resolution 50/81. We must take account of its recommendations in every area, particularly those of education, employment, health, the environment, and ensuring full, effective participation of women in the life of society and in the decision-making process.

The Principality of Monaco, which ratified the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination and is a party to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, is very concerned by contemporary forms of racism and marginalization. We encourage the efforts of the United Nations and the Special Rapporteur on this subject.

We are also seriously alarmed by the development and scale of child prostitution and the trade in young girls and boys. An important initiative was taken last August by a non-governmental organization, End Child Prostitution in Asian Tourism, with the assistance of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the Government of Sweden.

We must all heed the work of the world Congress against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children. I am sure that the conclusions and recommendations of this Congress, in the form of an agenda for action, will raise our consciousness about the seriousness of the situation by encouraging States to adopt the necessary national and international measures.

By participating in the Congress, Monaco showed its commitment to a world policy to combat the commercial sexual exploitation of children. On the national level, this is taking the form of unreserved support for humanitarian associations and non-governmental organizations that are active in this area and, in particular for their efforts to sensitize others to this scourge, to prevent it and to rehabilitate its victims. We are also introducing a legislative initiative which should lead to a change in Monaco's penal code before the end of the year, with the introduction a new crime: the sexual exploitation of children for the satisfaction of the vices of others, whether these events occur in the Principality of Monaco or outside our national territory. Once this law is in effect, any person apprehended in Monaco who has committed, in any place whatsoever, acts that can be qualified as crimes or attacks against decency or morality according to the laws of Monaco as regards minors, can be prosecuted and tried.

I would add that the international community must also think about strengthening international legal protections in this area, in so far as existing texts, including the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child, particularly its articles 19 and 21, often remain inoperative because they are difficult to apply.

Similarly, the 1926 Slavery Convention, the 1956 Supplementary Convention on the Abolition of Slavery, and the 1949 Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and of the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others, which are very general in scope, do not provide sufficiently effective, speedy recourse in this particular area, where emergency action is necessary.

The strengthening of this protection in the form of a multilateral instrument, for instance, could permit judicial prosecution to go beyond national borders and for the illicit commerce in children and their commercial sexual exploitation to be categorized as crimes against humanity, that is, that they be considered indefensible under the Convention on the Non-applicability of Statutory Limitations to War Crimes and Crimes against Humanity of 26 November 1968. Article 1 of that Convention should thus be modified appropriately. Like those stipulated in the 1948 Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, these acts should not meet with a refusal to extradite. The law, and international law, should be fully capable of protecting these weak, destitute beings, while leaving no chance of impunity for the perpetrators of these vile crimes.

In addition to strengthening legal protections, we should also give some thought to the steps needed to rehabilitate these young victims, as broadly emphasized

by the Stockholm Congress; without such rehabilitation, that these children would fall back into prostitution circles might prove inevitable.

Although some of the behaviours I have just mentioned are intolerable and unacceptable, I wish now to speak of the United Nations Year for Tolerance, which ended in December 1995. Adopted in December 1993 thanks to a welcome initiative by the General Conference of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, and supported by a unanimous resolution of the General Assembly, this manifestation of faith in humankind, concluded with a Declaration and Plan of Action that were designed to inspire not only high-level politicians, but each of us in our daily lives.

In keeping with General Assembly resolution 49/213, the Follow-Up Plan of Action for the United Nations Year for Tolerance, accompanied by the Declaration of Principles that preceded it and that inspires it (A/51/201), is before this year's session of the General Assembly. It invites us to make a common effort to combat political and social factors which often seem to be at the origin of intolerance and hatred.

This invitation should receive the proper response, for it could contribute to providing solutions to the tensions that persist in the world, some of which, as we know, are extremely disquieting.

Throughout history, the most important moments of progress have certainly occurred during periods of real and profound tolerance. Such tolerance favoured thought, the arts, the sciences, the sharing of knowledge and values. It built civilizations and enabled them to draw together and mutually enrich one another in an exceptional way.

While many today are convinced that history probably has no meaning, it remains none the less a fragile and precious commodity, largely fashioned by the commitments and the will of man.

On 8 January next year we shall commemorate the seven-hundredth anniversary of the establishment of my family's dynasty in Monaco. In celebration of that event, many cultural and artistic events, some on an international scale, will take place throughout 1997. This will be our way of paying a tribute to our past as well as of expressing our confidence and faith in the future and destiny, not only of our country, but of mankind.

On that note, I should like to conclude my statement by thanking the President very much for having allowed me to speak.

The Acting President *(interpretation from Spanish)*: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank His Serene Highness Crown Prince Albert, Crown Prince of the Principality of Monaco, for the statement he has just made.

His Serene Highness Crown Prince Albert, Crown Prince of the Principality of Monaco, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by His Excellency Mr. Mendsaikhany Enkhsaikhan, Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Mongolia

The Acting President *(interpretation from Spanish)*: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Mongolia.

Mr. Mendsaikhany Enkhsaikhan, Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Mongolia, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President *(interpretation from Spanish)*: I have great pleasure in welcoming the Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Mongolia, Mr. Mendsaikhany Enkhsaikhan, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Enkhsaikhan (Mongolia): At the outset, I wish to extend my sincere congratulations to His Excellency Mr. Razali Ismail of Malaysia on his unanimous election to the high post of the presidency of this session of the General Assembly. I also wish to express my appreciation to His Excellency Mr. Freitas do Amaral for his excellent stewardship of the historic fiftieth session of the General Assembly.

The current session is being held at a time when the contours of a new international system are still being shaped. The twentieth century has witnessed the generation of enormous wealth. However, its distribution among regions, individual States and groups within States remains uneven. Scientific and technological developments have led to great strides in the advancement of human society while they have posed potentially disruptive threats to its survival. Trends towards globalization and integration are accompanied by the forces of fragmentation and marginalization. The winds

of sweeping democratic change have touched the greater part of the family of nations. By and large, the world today finds itself at a momentous juncture, at a time of both opportunities and challenges.

Today no country can afford to stay aloof from the tremendous transformations that are going on. In Mongolia, this year ushered in a new era. As a result of general elections held last summer, State power has been peacefully transferred to democratic political forces for the first time in 75 years. This marks the logical culmination of the 1990 democratic revolution and lays a solid foundation for stable democratic development. It is also a result of the simultaneous pursuit of both political and economic reforms.

The reform process is complex, time-consuming and challenging. Mongolia is not alone in facing the challenges inherent in laying the foundations of an open, democratic, just and humane society and in creating conditions for accelerated social and economic development. Like many other developing countries undergoing fundamental changes, Mongolia is faced with a host of problems: a low level of development, poverty, unemployment, an external debt burden and an underdeveloped national economic structure vulnerable to fluctuations on the world market. In spite of those hardships, the Government of Mongolia is determined to undertake decisive measures to speed up the reform process.

The Government of Mongolia, while preserving the continuity of its multipillared foreign policy, is resolved to pursue an active, balanced foreign policy based on national interests. Mongolia will continue its strong support for the multifaceted activities of the United Nations as one of the main pillars of its foreign policy.

A few days ago the international community witnessed a landmark event designed to attain the goal of a nuclear-weapon-free world. I refer to the adoption by the General Assembly of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. This morning I had the privilege of signing the Treaty on behalf of Mongolia. It is of paramount importance, in our view, that all the declared nuclear Powers and threshold States accede to the Treaty so that the many years of hard work that went into it may yield tangible results. With a view to contributing to an effective implementation of this important Treaty, Mongolia will actively participate in its international monitoring system.

We believe that the creation of more nuclear-weapon-free zones in different regions of the world will contribute to the strengthening of regional and international peace and security. Therefore, we commend and support the Declarations of Africa and South-East Asia as nuclear-weapon-free zones. In 1992, Mongolia declared its territory a nuclear-weapon-free zone, and I am pleased to note here that the nuclear-weapon States, along with other countries, have welcomed and supported our initiative. Mongolia intends to formalize and upgrade the status of the zone to the international level. In a broader context, it is essential to provide assurances to non-nuclear-weapon States against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons, in the form of an international instrument.

The advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice on the illegality of the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons, as well as the important recommendations contained in the report of the Canberra Commission, could serve as a sound basis in further negotiations on non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament.

While expressing Mongolia's satisfaction with the Chemical Weapons Convention that will soon come into force, I should like to stress the importance of its ratification by States with substantial arsenals of chemical weapons so that the Convention can be more effective in eliminating this type of weapon of mass destruction.

Turning to regional issues, I should like to underline in particular our deep concern over the uncertain situations in the Balkans and on the Korean peninsula. The recent events in the Middle East are adversely affecting the peace process that is under way. We believe that the parties concerned should exercise utmost restraint and resolve the problems by political negotiation, as envisaged in the Madrid and Oslo agreements.

The peaceful advancement of the human family and its safety can no longer be assured in a world characterized by abject poverty, external debt burdens, a growing technological and economic gap between the rich and the poor, widespread hunger and malnutrition, increasing violence and discrimination, crimes and drug use. It would probably be axiomatic to say that no one can ensure his or her own security at the expense of others. However, merely acknowledging this fact can hardly help solve the problem. There must be real determination and political will, coupled with collective action, to face the challenges ahead.

The recent international conferences on children, the environment, human rights, population, social

development and human settlements organized under the auspices of the United Nations have forged a clear vision and a forward-looking strategy for our common and concerted action toward the betterment of the human condition. Mongolia holds the view that this new framework for international development cooperation should find its due reflection in the Agenda for Development, which would ensure their integrated and comprehensive implementation and follow-up. Vital, in this regard, is a coherent coordination of the policies and activities of the various entities of the United Nations system and those of the Bretton Woods institutions at the global and national levels.

The implementation of the decisions of the aforementioned conferences requires genuine political commitment on the part of the international community and its individual members to substantially increase the resources for sustainable human development. We believe that mobilization of added financial resources can be made possible by reducing global military spending and capturing the resultant peace dividend for human priority needs. Our common and shared future calls for the donor countries that have not yet done so to honour their long-standing commitment to the 0.7 per cent target.

We welcome and support the World Trade Organization as a multilateral forum for defining an international trade policy aimed at coordinating and promoting the interests of countries with different levels of development. Mongolia will join this Organization shortly, which will allow it a greater involvement in world trade and economic integration. Likewise, Mongolia will actively endeavour to secure its proper place in the Asia-Pacific integration, a region characterized by high economic development and overall political stability.

Handicapped by their geographical location, the land-locked developing countries face particular difficulties in their development efforts. Owing to their disadvantaged position, they risk being further isolated and marginalized from the globalization process. In this connection, I wish to emphasize the practical importance of implementing the Global Framework for Transit Transport Cooperation Between Land-locked and Transit-developing Countries and the Donor Community, endorsed by the General Assembly at its last session.

South-South cooperation has become a potential instrument for accelerating the effective integration of developing countries into the global economy. I believe that the conference on finance, trade and investment to be held in Costa Rica next January will help to further enhance South-South cooperation by identifying its future priorities.

With the acceleration of scientific and technological progress, the question of protecting the environment from mercantile human activities is acquiring an ever-increasing importance. Effective international cooperation aimed at offsetting the adverse effects of industrialization on countries, especially in environmentally sensitive regions; preserving their unique nature and ecosystems; shielding them from natural disasters; and mitigating the damage inflicted is the order of the day. Furthermore, this requires an allocation of additional resources and their effective utilization. Elaboration of a national strategy for sustainable development, in line with the Earth Summit Declaration and Agenda 21, is well under way in my country. Mongolia attaches particular importance to the special session of the General Assembly scheduled for 1997 to review the implementation of Agenda 21. In preparation for that session, a study could be conducted on the root causes of the considerable increase in natural disasters over recent years, as noted in the report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization.

Today, it is vital to foster respect for and compliance with the norms of international law. In this regard, Mongolia welcomes the establishment of the International Seabed Authority and supports the creation of an international criminal court. We believe that the international community should elaborate the guiding principles of conducting international negotiations — the main instrument of bilateral and international diplomacy.

Mongolia fully shares the view that the United Nations should be restructured, its activities modified and democratized, and its effectiveness and efficiency improved along the lines of the objectives set forth in the Declaration on the Occasion of the Fiftieth Anniversary of the United Nations. I hope that the ongoing deliberations in the high-level Working Groups of the General Assembly will result in the adoption of specific action-oriented recommendations that will make the United Nations better equipped, financed and structured to serve the ideals enshrined in the Charter.

Security Council reform should be intensified through the introduction of greater transparency in its activities and the democratization of its working methods. The expansion of its composition must ensure the fair and equitable representation of various regions and groups of

States as well as its increased effectiveness and efficiency. It goes without saying that, in the final analysis, this world Organization can be only as good as its Member States allow it to be.

Less than four years separate us from the next millennium. The time has come for resolute action. The time has come to collectively undertake radical changes. The time has come to fulfil the dreams of our forefathers to build a better future for our children.

The Acting President *(interpretation from Spanish):* On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Mongolia for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Mendsaikhany Enkhsaikhan, Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Mongolia, was escorted from the rostrum.

The Acting President (*interpretation from Spanish*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Destin-Arsène Tsaty-Boungou, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Cooperation and Francophonie of the Congo.

Mr. Tsaty-Boungou (Congo) (*interpretation from French*): The delegation of the Republic of the Congo wishes to express to the President its warmest congratulations on his election to lead the fifty-first session of the General Assembly.

My country is particularly pleased by this choice, as it attests to the international community's recognition of the constant and active commitment of his country to ensuring the triumph of the ideals of peace sought by the United Nations. I have no doubt that under his guidance this session will help humankind take new strides towards peace and progress.

To his predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Diogo Freitas do Amaral, I would like to express our great appreciation for all he did in spite of the trying international conditions, which were continually complicated by human actions.

Finally, from this rostrum, my delegation wishes to welcome the tremendous efforts of the Secretary-General, Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali over the past five years. All his work has contributed greatly to the specific efforts of Member States to ensure that our universal institution is better able to meet the many challenges of our times and more likely to avail itself of the many opportunities of the coming century to ensure that humanity will prosper.

The idea of humankind prospering leads me to wonder whether such a phenomenon can become universal at a time when, despite the efforts of the United Nations there are so many differences between nations around the world, so many contradictions and conflicting interests between rich and poor countries and, in Africa in particular, between those who wield political power and those who seek it, frequently using armed force.

However, it must be emphasized that far from being the by-product of a sombre period in the history of humankind, the United Nations remains after more than half a century, the best instrument for achieving and consolidating peace, for the progress of humankind and for preserving diversity around the globe. It also remains a place of legal equality between nations and a crucible of the ideals of humanism in which the interests and the destinies of all continents and all peoples should be fused but not confused.

This being said, the vision of the founding fathers of the United Nations is yet to become a reality. This is possible only if Member States are truly committed to striving for such ideals. Is it Utopian for the increasingly fragile nations to do this when they are trying to find their own equilibrium? Unfortunately, it is very tempting to say yes, as our world is increasingly divided between those who have knowledge and wealth and those who are sinking in ignorance, disease, war and poverty.

In saying this to this Assembly, I, who come from a continent on the brink of oblivion, am not telling anyone anything new. I beg the Assembly's indulgence to repeat the same prayer, the same cry of distress, already voiced here, now and in the past, by our eminent predecessors.

They have said many times, more eloquently than I can, that Africa, 51 years later, is an ailing continent at whose bedside the commonly held notion of international solidarity should be translated into resolutions and quickly followed by actions. The wealthiest countries will then have helped thousands of human beings to join the modern era through scientific and technological progress.

This is a major challenge that calls for foresight, humanism and the mobilization of the richest countries if our world is to be in a better position to deal peacefully with the stakes of the future in the North and the South.

In this connection, the process of the democratization and economic integration of Africa

should be further encouraged and supported by the international community. This is the basis for liberating all the creative African forces that used to be held in check by dictatorial regimes that were not well disposed to fostering intellectual development.

The end of dictatorial regimes in certain African countries and the spread of the democratization process in Africa does not automatically mean the establishment of truly democratic institutions, as the democrats in countries with democratic systems may have wished.

Caught between seeking its future and reconciling the present with its past, Africa must, with universal support, find modern institutional means of curbing the political tension that frequently results from tribalistic or clannish view of power, which in turn results in the civil wars that so hamper the continent in its march towards peace.

Seen in this way, democratic pluralism should be a measure of our march towards progress and, at this stage, make peace the stabilizing and constant factor of democratic institutions. It should also, and above all, ensure that peace is a decisive factor in human development in Africa.

Our continent can no longer take democracy to mean the mechanical imposition of some model of democratic institutions while forgetting our historical baggage or giving in to the temptation to undo with the stroke of a pen the bases of our social and cultural values.

It was by seeking a true balance between peace and democratic institutions that the President of the Republic of the Congo was able to restore peace in our country after two years of civil war, following the democratic elections that brought him to power. By this same philosophy, having integrated members of the major opposing political party into the Government of the Republic, Mr. Pascal Lissouba supports the idea of a necessary period of democratic transition. This period is one of adapting the various political actors to the needs of the democratic regime, particularly to the principle of political change-over with the preservation of our values based upon sharing, solidarity and respect for authority.

We are convinced that an approach based on the concept of participatory democracy will make it possible to reduce the sources of conflict between those who have been elected by the people and those who have lost in democratic elections without affecting in the least the rules of the democratic regime, particularly the principles of equality, liberty and the right of the people to choose their main leaders.

We think that African democracy, freed from the dangers of political individualism, the temptations of power for oneself and the torments of tribalism, even with the legacy of political systems of the past, can become a factor for pacification, a fairer distribution of the fruits of collective efforts and social and economic progress.

In this vision, the present weakness of our political systems can be regarded as a phase in the democratic transition to a modern developed Africa only if the international community fully realizes that democracy cannot prosper in poor countries, where politics were for so long the road to social success, without exposing our citizens to the political games of those for whom the advent of democracy and its attendant competitive elections mean the end of the eminent position they enjoy in society thanks to the exercise of political power. The various civil wars that repeatedly cast a shadow over our continent are sad testimony to this reality.

Therefore, assistance to promote economic development in African countries that are committed to the democratization of their institutions will result in the emergence of new political classes that are protected from need and that will be more likely to regard politics as a means of governing a community of men and women who are bound by a territory and a common destiny than as the only means to get ahead in an economically poor environment.

As the Assembly can imagine, the economic development of Africa is a decisive factor for stability, development, pacification and democratization. The current world economic situation is clear evidence that globalization is inevitable. However, globalization could also have serious drawbacks if measures are not adopted to rectify fundamental imbalances. Increased competition means poor countries, particularly those in the sub-Saharan region, will risk losing more market shares and will be increasingly marginalized.

If it is first and foremost up to the African countries to demonstrate that their marginalization is determined only by fate and that their current situation is merely one of those tragic aftermaths with which history has frequently sprinkled the course of human events, then it is also up to the international community as a whole, in active solidarity, to make a special commitment to

supporting the efforts of the African countries to deal with the challenges before them.

This is why I must emphasize the role of international cooperation and, particularly, the importance of official development assistance for our countries. This assistance, important in principle, should be enhanced with action, in accordance with commitments that were entered into, in order to meet the needs of the poorest populations and to make Governments better able to meet their obligations. Unfortunately, the decrease in such aid runs counter to this view.

My country is pleased to note the Secretary-General's Special Initiative to help Africa, which reinforces the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s. The mid-term review falls far short of our expectations, however. The Congo supports the recommendations emerging from that assessment and hopes that the international community will do its utmost to respect its commitments towards Africa.

Earlier I mentioned the tragedies of the African peoples caused by civil war. My country, the Congo, which since March 1995 has presided over the Standing Advisory Committee of the United Nations on Security Questions in Central Africa, would like to say how pleased it is to note that in Angola, as well as in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the parties are endeavouring to implement the peace agreements and are thus enjoying the support of the international community. We must welcome the efforts of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) to settle the Liberian conflict, and we are pleased to note the signing of the new peace Agreement, which, in the light of current political developments in that country, gives us reasons for hope.

However, we are deeply concerned by the situation in some other parts of the world. The recent, spiralling acts of violence in the Middle East and the number of civilian casualties have weighed heavily on the peace process. The Republic of the Congo emphasizes the importance of an early resumption of dialogue, with a view to continuing the peace process in the Middle East.

The Republic of the Congo welcomes progress in nuclear disarmament, particularly the opening for signature last 24 September of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). This historic act strengthens the extension of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and will promote international relations based upon peaceful coexistence and trust between States. This is the course of action chosen by African countries in the Pelindaba Treaty, which makes Africa a nuclear-free zone.

We must express our deep concern over the situations in Africa in which peace is threatened daily, both within national borders and between States. By establishing the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa, the General Assembly has established a cooperative framework that will enable 11 States from Central Africa to engage in dialogue in order to build confidence among themselves and establish their own machinery to facilitate the prevention, management and settlement of conflicts in the subregion. The first summit of the Heads of State and Government, held on 8 July 1996 in Yaoundé, Cameroon, led to the signing of a non-aggression pact.

We want to express our sincere thanks to the countries, particularly Japan, that have contributed to the special trust fund to implement the Committee's programme. That fund made it possible to hold in Yaoundé, under the auspices of the United Nations, a seminar for training specialized units of peace operations.

I would also like to express the Committee's thanks to President Julius Nyerere for his role in finding a peaceful solution to the Burundi crisis. The Government of the Congo calls upon all parties to the conflict in Burundi, a fraternal country and a member of the Advisory Committee, to regain control of the situation and to create through dialogue conditions for a return to peace and national reconciliation.

Before concluding, I would like to mention some recent developments in the economic and political situation in my country. Since the National Forum for the Culture of Peace organized with the support of United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in Brazzaville in December 1995 and the signing of a peace pact among the various political parties, we are more than ever determined to address the most crucial issues before our country, namely, consolidating peace and combating poverty.

At the initiative of His Excellency President Pascal Lissouba, all the Congolese political forces have signed a framework agreement on census-taking with a view to prepare the second presidential election of our democratic era. The recently appointed Government is endeavouring to organize these elections in transparency, peace and respect for deadlines. In order to meet its commitments

the Government of Congo will be able to count on the United Nations, friendly countries and all those who promote the consolidation of democracy in Africa.

The signing on 20 June of a strengthened structural adjustment mechanism with the International Monetary Fund ensures that our people will support an economic and social recovery programme despite the many sacrifices it will entail. These efforts will be pursued with the same commitment in the hope that our country will receive the support of the international community at the round table of donor countries to be held at Geneva in November.

Congo, freed from the burdens that have delayed its development for so long and mortgaged its future, will finally be able to offer its people the peace and progress for which they have been waiting so long.

The Acting President (*interpretation from Spanish*): The next speaker is the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Lebanon, His Excellency Mr. Fares Bouez.

Mr. Bouez (Lebanon) (*interpretation from Arabic*): At the outset, allow me to congratulate Ambassador Razali on his election as President of this session of the General Assembly and to wish him success in his noble task of enhancing and strengthening the role of the United Nations. I would also like to express our thanks and appreciation to the former President of the General Assembly, Mr. Diogo Freitas do Amaral, for his efforts during his presidency.

Half a century has elapsed since the birth of the United Nations. Mankind wanted the United Nations to be a bastion of justice, peace and human rights. It is meant to be an authority where problems are solved and truth upheld, where mankind can find an organization to defend its rights when they are usurped and stand by its side when it is threatened. In founding the United Nations, mankind wanted to put an end to wars and usher in an era of peace, of respect for the principle of State sovereignty and of safeguarding peoples' independence and their right to self-determination and to the fulfilment of their aspirations.

With the telecommunications revolution and the fall of political, economic, demographic, cultural and security boundaries and barriers, States and their peoples need an effective machinery for consultation and constructive dialogue. The scientific and technological revolution has increased our need for a greater synergy to face the complex problems of our time and to bridge the gap between the countries and nations of the world so as to enable them to implement jointly subregional and interregional projects that none can do alone.

The world population explosion and the concomitant ecological degradation have made the environment incapable of meeting rising demand. Competition for natural resources and for the protection of vital interests have risen sharply.

The increased number and growing sophistication of lethal nuclear, chemical and bacteriological weapons of mass destruction and the further development of their intercontinental delivery systems heightens the threat of annihilation for many countries and peoples, especially when some of the countries which possess them lack even minimal credibility.

Some societies are overwhelmed by the degree of sophistication of the media, by its role and by the speed with which political, economic, social, cultural and scientific news flows through it. These societies may not be ready to assimilate and absorb this flow of information, so they react by isolating themselves, by withdrawing into seclusion, or by hiding behind the veil of tradition to protect their identity. This manifests itself in the extremism and fundamentalism these societies use to shield themselves from what is often perceived as a threat to their identity.

These and other problems and challenges require invigorating the United Nations machinery and renewing confidence in its credibility, justice and efficiency, to free its decisions from hegemony, eliminate its imbalances and bring consistency to the standards it uses for the implementation of its resolutions. We must do this if we want the United Nations to remain a valuable global authority and the alternative to destructive and violent confrontation.

The world has witnessed a succession of local and regional crises. Lebanon, which has suffered immensely, plagued by the wars of others on its soil, follows with concern the developments in different parts of the world.

The crisis over the sovereignty of the United Arab Emirates on the Greater Tunb, Lesser Tunb and Abu Musa islands has not yet been settled. We hope referring the case to the International Court of Justice will result in a settlement reaffirming the United Arab Emirates claim of sovereignty.

We also support arbitration of the case of the Greater and Lesser Hanish islands between Yemen and Eritrea; both parties have agreed to such arbitration.

Support for the unity, security and stability of Liberia and Angola remains a primary objective to put an end to the suffering of their peoples.

Lebanon likewise supports the Republic of Cyprus in its efforts to build unity and sovereignty over all its territory to put an end to the suffering of its people and to the effects of the problem on the Government of Cyprus with respect to the reunification of the island.

Lebanon has been following with grave concern the recent deterioration of the situation in Iraq and the suffering of the Iraqi people, who still lack food and other basic needs. We do not believe that the recent events represent the best way to address the Iraqi problem. We call rather for the implementation of Security Council resolution 986 (1995), and for a commitment to the unity and sovereignty of Iraq, which would guarantee the inviolability of the geopolitical map of the Middle East. If a breach were to be opened in Iraq, the consequences would definitely extend to other extremely sensitive regions, which would further complicate the situation. Our support of the sovereignty of the State of Kuwait over all its territory prompts us to appeal for a permanent guarantee of its sovereignty and security so that we can turn the page on this bitter chapter of history once and for all.

The credibility enjoyed by international law is based on its ability to find just and complete solutions to important questions. This is the mission of the United Nations and it therefore should be spared from having to intervene in less important crises.

The credibility of the United Nations is still called into question and this, in turn, undermines the role of the Organization in the field of the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons. The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) has been extended despite the reservations expressed by some States, including Lebanon, on the circumstances of its extension, including Israel's refusal to become a party to it. Israel is allowed to maintain a formidable nuclear arsenal in one of the most sensitive and volatile regions of the world without any safeguards or controls; this poses a threat to all the peoples of the region. The cessation of nuclear testing has been presented as an alternative to the NPT. Despite the many promises made prior to the extension of the NPT that Israel would ultimately accede to it, this has yet to happen. Using double standards in dealing with States can only create imbalances, which in turn increases the number of exceptions to the rule. The effectiveness of the Organization depends on the equal treatment of all States, and the United Nations remains the means to implement such policies.

In this context, Lebanon enthusiastically supports enhancing the functioning and management of the Organization in all areas, particularly with regard to the scope of representation of the world's peoples and the countries in the Security Council. Recent changes and new requirements demand more realistic geographic and numerical representation in that body. We need to eliminate the perception of hegemony that some have developed about the role and decision-making power of the Council, which they seem to believe has been seized by certain major Powers. Lebanon believes that all proposals in this regard must be carefully studied, particularly those that are compatible with the approach I have outlined and that enjoy broad support among States. I am thinking in particular of the proposals of the non-aligned countries and of Italy.

In recent years, and despite the many difficult circumstances that have accompanied his years in office, the Secretary-General, Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, has made commendable efforts to further global peace, security and stability. He has worked to solve problems of social and economic development as well as those of health in many parts of the world. Furthermore, he has undertaken numerous reforms within the Organization. His term has been distinguished by dynamism towards the achievement of the Organization's primary goals. Despite the obstacles, his accomplishments are many and the world bears witness to them. This continued course, as seen in a renewed mandate, would be a basic guarantee of the stability of United Nations policies. Lebanon believes that the renewal of the Secretary-General's mandate would make it possible to complete many projects and measures undertaken during his first term. We therefore call upon States to support his bid for a renewed, strengthened mandate.

We would have very much liked our participation in this session, several years following the Madrid conference, to be an occasion for gratitude for the restoration of peace in the Middle East. We had hoped to express our gratitude to the countries, peoples and organizations which have tried to bring about this peace. Five years have passed since the Madrid peace conference, not counting the preparatory year. At the

time, we welcomed the initiative and believed in the sponsorship and the subject matter of the conference. The sponsors were two influential Powers, and the substance was geared towards the achievement of a comprehensive, just and lasting peace on the basis of the implementation of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973), and with regard to Lebanon, Security Council resolution 425 (1978), as well as the principle of land for peace. We accepted the invitation and thought that the others who accepted it had also agreed to its substance, and that the only pending issues would be implementation, scheduling and mechanisms.

But years have passed, and instead of moving forward towards implementation, Israel has reneged on its commitments and has tried to move away from what was already done. As soon as the new Israeli Government was in power, it adopted its manifesto: "The four No's" — no to the withdrawal from the occupied Syrian Golan; no to the withdrawal from the occupied West Bank; no to the settlement of the question of Jerusalem; and no to recognition of the national rights of the Palestinian people in a State of their own.

To the contrary, the principle of land for peace has been replaced by the principle of peace for security, meaning refraining from waging a new war. Instead of fulfilling commitments, formulas must be changed. Instead of Madrid, there is the unknown. Instead of putting an end to settlements, settlements are being expanded. A tunnel is now being built under the Al-Aqsa Mosque, in a clear act of provocation to the people's sensitivities.

We were asked to shake hands, to offer recognition and to normalize relations without knowing what will happen to our rights. We, the victims of aggression, are asked to give security guarantees to the aggressor. Those who do not possess weapons are asked to give assurances to those who have one of the largest nuclear arsenals in the world and who could not be convinced to accede to the NPT when other countries have been forced to accept its indefinite extension.

Since the new Israeli Government came to power, it has backed away from the peace process, although occasional misleading steps are made. The new Government of Israel has resorted to a meaningless media campaign to disguise its rejection of peace. We first heard the "Lebanon first" slogan, but this too was void of any meaning except as an attempt at isolation and to serve the purposes of the media campaign. We then heard of the meeting between the Palestinian and Israeli presidents. Once again, the occasion was exploited, but meaning remained absent.

It has become clear that the objective of the Israeli Government was to numb world public opinion and undo what was agreed upon at the peace conference and the ensuing negotiations. It is perfectly clear that Israel does not have a policy for peace. It only has a policy of changing formulas, a policy of threats and challenges, a policy that Israel can use to further its expansionist and settlement schemes.

Just as the world was on the verge of believing that peace had become possible in the Middle East region, here we are facing the unknown, facing the worst.

Some States in the region wanted to precipitate the earlier optimism by moving to normalize relations. Now they bear the burden of Israeli logic. Now the peoples of the region have been thrust back into an era of inevitable confrontation, violence, and resistance. No sooner had the development plans of the Middle East region been put into place and the world was showing interest in a future of peace than mistrust and pessimism returned to prevail. No sooner had the historic opportunity for the realization of a great dream begun to crystallize than this opportunity started to fade, leaving the peoples of the region with only one alternative — to confront occupation, arbitrary rule and obstinacy — since all international peace efforts are failing. Today's violence in Palestine and in southern Lebanon is a direct result of the negative positions of the Israeli Government. It presages dire consequences should the peace process collapse.

Since the Madrid Conference, the United States has tried, through two successive presidencies, to push the peace process forward towards settlement. In order to do so, the United States requested that the peace process be taken out of the context of the United Nations and the Security Council and be confined to the mechanisms defined at Madrid. The United States sought to reassure Israel by all military, material and economic means available, even to the detriment of the Arabs, with the idea of reviving the confidence of the Israelis. Then the United States imposed concepts to increase guarantees given to Israel to consolidate the peace process, which were provisionally accepted, despite the fact that they were unsound. Today, these efforts are threatened by the party that benefited from them in the first place.

Today, the President of the United States will try to bring together the parties concerned, pursuing his responsibility to salvage the peace. Israel will continue to manoeuvre, and will exploit the occasion provided by United States presidential elections to undermine the steps that were already in place. They will foil the efforts of the United States, which we supported even though these called for a continued and somewhat iniquitous tolerance of Israel, despite the fact that Israel's excesses had always been covered by assurances for the sake of peace.

We must return to the foundations of peace as announced at Madrid, resume the negotiations from where they were interrupted and realize that the opportunity for peace which had started to crystallize still presents a historic opportunity. It must be recognized that what was achieved at Madrid is the only foundation acceptable to the people of the region. If peace is ever to be salvaged in the Middle East, this is the only way to achieve it.

Lebanon has for many years suffered the aftermath and consequences of the Middle East crisis and has paid a heavy toll. Today, through domestic political measures, security, development and economic achievements, Lebanon is once again proving that it can confront difficulties and face challenges. Lebanon is showing that its national unity, the restoration of full sovereignty over its territory and respect for its independence are inevitably more solidly inherent in its existence than some might believe.

In the future, if peace is safeguarded, Lebanon will prove that its history is larger than its geographical borders and that its role by far exceeds its size. When Lebanon regains its sovereignty over all of its territories now under Israeli occupation, when the United Nations has restored its credibility by implementing Security Council resolution 425 (1978) on an equal footing with resolutions relating to other parts of the world, when Lebanese citizens are released from Israeli detention camps where they are imprisoned with only minimal human rights, then and only then will the bleeding stop and the wound heal.

The Middle East is tired of being an active volcano threatening world peace. We have for too long been robbed of peace to the detriment of the entire world. Opportunities will not forever remain for those seeking peace. The peace which we sought and for which we have long appealed is threatened today. The failure of our endeavours to achieve peace will close the door to any new attempt in the foreseeable future. If reviving peace is a difficult job, the ramifications of failure will be even more difficult for the whole world.

The days when problems were confined to national boundaries are well over, and so are the days when boundaries were walls keeping crises contained. We hope that peace is still possible. But it must be a just peace, not a despoiling one; a real peace, not a theatrical one; an equitable peace not an iniquitous one. It must be a peace that calms rather than one that fans the anger of peoples.

May God forever guide the steps of those who seek and work for peace, and inspire those who still oppose it.

The Acting President *(interpretation from Spanish)*: The next speaker is the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Oman, His Excellency Mr. Yousef Bin Al-Alawi Bin Abdulla.

Mr. Abdulla (Oman) (*interpretation from Arabic*): At the outset and on behalf of my delegation, allow me to congratulate Ambassador Razali on his election as President of the General Assembly at its fifty-first session. Oman has long enjoyed close friendly relations with his country, Malaysia, and we are confident that given his leadership and vast diplomatic experience our deliberations will reach a meaningful and successful conclusion, to which end we shall cooperate in every way.

I would like to take this opportunity to pay special tribute to his predecessor, Mr. Diogo Freitas do Amaral, the representative of the fraternal country of Portugal, for the exemplary manner in which he steered the work of the previous session.

We also wish to convey our sincere thanks and appreciation for the unwavering support of the Secretary-General, Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali. He has enhanced and reinvigorated the role of the United Nations in all areas of interest, in spite of the problems and obstacles faced by the international Organization as a result of its recent financial crisis.

Our celebration last year of the fiftieth anniversary, the Nations golden jubilee, offered us a unique opportunity to review and contemplate the tremendous and substantial achievements of this body over the past five decades, during which this international Organization has made vigorous efforts to save the international community from the scourge of war and to alleviate the

sufferings of vulnerable peoples throughout the world. We are fully confident of the United Nations capability to discharge the responsibilities entrusted to it in future by the international community.

Although the world widely considers the Middle East to be a region of great significance, a comprehensive peace has not yet been achieved there. The international community witnessed an important breakthrough with the convening of the 1991 Madrid Peace Conference aimed at reaching a comprehensive and peaceful solution to this issue. Since then, concerted and positive steps have been taken to achieve that long-awaited objective, such as the signing of many agreements and conventions between the main parties to the conflict, particularly on the Palestinian-Israeli and Jordanian-Israeli tracks. Such steps have made the peace process in the Middle East more deep-rooted and irrevocable.

All these attempts have been made through the courageous and strenuous efforts of the concerned parties in the Middle East, with the help of international support and assistance. My country's contribution has included support and encouragement of these steps through its contacts with the concerned parties at the bilateral and multilateral levels of the peace negotiations, notably the agreement to establish commercial ties with Israel and other accords with the Palestinian Authority, as well as the agreement reached by the group of founder countries to establish a Middle East research centre for water desalination.

Because of the procrastination and hesitation of the newly elected Government of Israel fully to implement all previous agreements, the peace process in the Middle East requires, now more than ever before, the support of the international community.

The peace process in the Middle East is a mutual responsibility of and full partnership between the Arab countries and Israel. In a partnership, every party must reap the fruits of peace or bear the risks and losses. Proceeding from this understanding, all parties must be treated on an equal footing. Furthermore, my country sees no justification for Israel's continued blockading of the Palestinian cities, both from the humanitarian point of view and because it undermines all relations between the Palestinian people and their Israeli counterparts, as was recently seen in the bloody confrontations that occurred in Al-Quds following the opening of a tunnel by the Israeli Government at an Islamic holy site. Moreover, the expansion of hostilities at the expense of the peace negotiations will serve no one but the enemies of peace and the supporters of confrontation and animosity.

Given such unacceptable measures, my country's efforts to promote the principles of confidence-building and mutual cooperation in this area will be hampered and delayed. We call upon the Government of Israel to close the tunnel. At the same time, we hope that the summit to be hosted today by President Clinton in Washington will be successful.

My country calls upon Israel to assume its primary responsibility for revitalizing the peace process by resuming the peace negotiations and taking credible steps towards the tangible and practical implementation of all agreements reached in this regard. It also hopes that the progress achieved at the Madrid Peace Conference will have a positive impact on all tracks, including the Syrian-Israeli and Lebanese-Israeli tracks. We believe that it is high time for the concerned parties to capitalize on the lessons of the past and work together in order to restore the momentum of peace and achieve a comprehensive settlement of this issue. In order to preserve the momentum of the peace process, my country will stand ready to extend every possible assistance and to take positive steps to enhance the peace process in the Middle East.

My country expresses its satisfaction with the situation in Iraq in the aftermath of the recent events and developments in the north of the country, which raised tensions and nearly destabilized the region again. We call upon all concerned parties to abide by international law and to focus on the implementation of the relevant Security Council resolutions on Iraq, as well as to resume and activate the negotiations between the conflicting parties, in order to maintain the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Iraq.

On the other hand, we welcome the memorandum of understanding signed between Iraq and the United Nations, allowing Iraq to implement resolution 986 (1995). In our view, if implemented, that resolution will help alleviate the suffering of the brotherly people of Iraq. While drawing the international community's attention to the irrelevant linkage between the implementation of the aforementioned resolution and recent events in northern Iraq, and to the humanitarian appeals inside the country, we call on Iraq to cooperate fully with the United Nations in a manner that guarantees the effective and swift implementation of this resolution. Iraq is also requested to cooperate with the United

Nations in implementing other international resolutions on the release of Kuwaiti detainees and properties and the nationals of other countries detained in Iraq, in the hope that Iraq's full compliance and further cooperation with the United Nations Special Commission on Iraq will pave the way for the possible lifting of the international embargo and the restoration of peace and stability in the region.

With regard to the question of disarmament, the United Nations has played an important role in diffusing the threat of weapons of mass destruction and promoting an equitable balance between the regional Powers. My country has participated in the Commission on Disarmament's meetings on regional security as part of an international effort to reactivate peace negotiations in the Middle East. While actively supporting the Commission, the Sultanate of Oman would point out that such efforts alone cannot guarantee equitable security in the region if they are not paired with other effective and practical measures to eliminate weapons of mass destruction there and to promote comprehensive and unconditional acceptance of international monitoring and inspection of all activities related to this matter.

The Sultanate of Oman was also among the first countries to sign the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction and the first country in the Middle East to ratify it. This is a clear indication of my country's distinctive role in enhancing security and stability in the region and throughout the world. Similarly, it is a great honour for me to announce to this international forum the Sultanate's decision to accede to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), in the hope that other countries that have not yet done so will follow the same course before the end of the year so as to ensure the Treaty's universality and to secure a world free of all weapons of mass destruction in which all mankind can live in peace, love and prosperity. My country, like many others, voted in favour of this Treaty and, while we salute all who contributed to this major achievement, we call on the United Nations not to stop here, but to continue its efforts to free the world once and for all from all nuclear weapons and weapons of mass destruction. We call upon the nuclear-weapon States in particular to implement time-bound programmes in order to achieve this noble objective as soon as possible.

We would like to express our deep concern and regret *vis-à-vis* terrorist acts that target the lives of innocent people — including children, women and the elderly — and violate their legitimate right to live in peace and prosperity. The international community should take immediate and collective action to combat this phenomenon. We support all sincere and faithful efforts to convene an international conference to address and eliminate this problem and related aspects and to ensure that the perpetrators of such terrorist acts do not go unprosecuted and are brought to justice.

The Dayton Agreement for Bosnia and Herzegovina, signed a year ago, has proved to be the optimal solution for putting an end to that tragic four-year war, which killed, wounded or displaced many Bosnians. My country welcomes this historic Agreement and made every possible effort as a Security Council member and at regional and international forums to put an end to the suffering of the Bosnian people and the atrocities committed against them and to restore security, stability and prosperity to all the peoples of the Balkans. We hope that the results of the elections held recently in Bosnia will pave the way for a better and prosperous future in which the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina can live in peace, tranquillity and cooperation.

Effective participation in international and regional conferences on environmental issues is one of the ways in which the Sultanate of Oman is helping to improve and coordinate its environmental policies. My country has played an active role in many of these conferences and has hosted some as a contribution to increasing public awareness at the national, regional and international levels. We are fully convinced that, through concerted efforts, the international community can preserve the environment and the world's ecosystems. We emphasize the need for all countries to participate effectively in the international agreements and conventions aimed at conserving the ecological system, preventing environmental degradation, enhancing international scientific exchange and creating an international information network.

In Oman, we focus consistently on the development of human resources, the improvement of our technical and vocational education, the encouragement of the private sector and economic diversification. Our fifth development plan, initiated at the beginning of this year, has several objectives,. including the improvement of technical and vocational education in Oman, the encouragement of the private sector and economic diversification and the establishment of an economic balance conducive to foreign investment. We have also updated our tax systems in accordance with an equation that would establish a level playing field for foreign

investments. A financial centre has recently been established in Muscat to deal with the activities of foreign trade and investments in Oman. The commercial and regional economic groups have had a major impact on international efforts to expand the range of mutual economic interests and influence the free flow of trade and investment throughout the world. In this context, my country has participated with its sister countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) in exploring every possible means to promote and expand free trade and investment among these countries or between any other international groups.

My country has also participated actively in founding a new economic group of the littoral States of the Indian Ocean, including several African countries, to trigger commercial activity among these countries, develop economic cooperation and maximize opportunities for the present and future investment and exploitation of their natural and human resources in the best interests of their peoples. We are confident that the establishment of such a new economic group, which embraces many countries with deep-rooted historic and cultural ties, will ultimately enhance cooperation between its member States and affect other economic factors, such as raw materials, human resources and energy.

Here I would like to talk about Africa. A number of African countries are still suffering from the aftermath of the cold war, which resulted in internal political turmoil and crisis, leading to a decline in gross national products. Africa's role is indispensable. We have to help it assume its natural place on the international scene. We therefore call upon the United Nations and the international community to continue to extend assistance to Africa through further cooperation with all its regional organizations.

Technological progress has greatly speeded communications between countries and economic advancement. My country welcomes the outcome of the summit of industrial countries held last June in Lyon, France, at which these countries reaffirmed their solidarity with the international community's efforts to solve the problems and reduce the burdens associated with globalization. Similarly, the developing countries should benefit from the outcome of the Uruguay Round.

The developing countries are pushing to adopt market-economy policies and undertaking further structural economic reforms in support of free trade and investment. They are also looking forward to the capital flows and technology transfers that can help strengthen their economic and social development, improve the quality of their productivity and upgrade their services. This in turn will enable these countries to increase their development, widen their markets and enhance the international competitiveness of developing countries, creating a more independent world in which stability and prosperity will prevail.

My Government has already requested full membership in the World Trade Organization (WTO). We have been following its work for a year now. Our accession to WTO membership would be a big step for us. It would enhance our development, promote our services and upgrade our productivity standards to the fullest level possible. To that end, we must guarantee a reasonable balance between our national interests and regional and international benefits. In this context, the Sultanate of Oman, as a developing country, has been looking forward to receiving the global support and assistance which, under the generalized system of preferences, the international community extends to developing countries to help them address the challenges posed by economic reforms and structural adjustment. In both the short and long terms, the international community should continue to enhance this system.

As can be seen in its national legislation and norms, such as the national law of commercial signs and the patenting system which governs new inventions within the countries of the GCC, Oman has played a commendable role in protecting intellectual property. Furthermore, a law to protect copyrights and publications has been enacted in the general context of updating and improving the legislation and norms of trade and investment in Oman. Given Oman's support of the principles embodied in the new global trend to protect intellectual property rights and its desire fully to participate and cooperate in this regard, my Government has decided to accede to the World Intellectual Property Organization.

As we approach the twenty-first century, we are prompted by hope to continue to work and cooperate collectively in maintaining international peace and security to enhance life for the current and future generations. Such an objective cannot be achieved without the firm commitment of the international community to reviewing and adopting clear economic guidelines for an urgent and serious approach to the establishment of a permanent, effective economic mechanism to deal with this matter for the benefit of all of mankind. The United Nations should assume the

primary responsibility of addressing these great challenges and discharge in an effective manner the global duties entrusted to it by the international community.

We appreciate the complexity of the task of reforming the United Nations and its organs, but we also believe that it can be accomplished through the establishment of dynamic and cost-effective mechanisms for achieving selected goals and meeting the urgent needs of future development plans.

We support the Secretary-General's medium-term proposals for an objective strategy for the programmes of the future work of the United Nations. In this connection, we express our concern regarding the deterioration of the financial situation of the United Nations. We urge Member States to fulfil their financial obligations and thus enable the United Nations to carry out its functions effectively. We would also emphasize the responsibility of the Security Council — its permanent members in particular — to their financial commitments to peacekeeping operations, in coordination with the various regional and international bodies of the United Nations, which collectively endeavour to secure appropriate solutions to international conflicts. We call on the international community to accelerate its efforts to review and reform the administrative organs of the United Nations in a manner that conforms to the global aspirations and expectations of the forthcoming century.

The Acting President (*interpretation from Spanish*): I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of Burundi, His Excellency Mr. Luc Rukingama.

Mr. Rukingama (Burundi) (*interpretation from French*): The Burundi delegation, which I have the honour of leading at the current session of this General Assembly, would like to begin by taking this opportunity to present the friendly greetings of the Government and people of Burundi.

Burundi attaches overwhelming importance to the noble ideals of justice, peace and security which the United Nations has defended and pursued. This is why, even during the acute crisis that has rocked our country these past three years, we have always tried to participate as actively as possible in these proceedings. We offer well-deserved thanks for the Organization's tireless efforts to put an end to the fratricidal war we have been experiencing since 21 October 1993.

Our delegation welcomes the fitting choice of a worthy son of Malaysia to act as President of the fifty-first session of the General Assembly of our Organization. We are convinced that his intellectual and moral qualities, together with his thorough knowledge of the concerns of the world today, are undeniable assets in ensuring the success of our work.

He can count on the full support and readiness of my country, which has a Vice-President on the Bureau, and we will make our modest contribution to ensuring the success of the work of the President.

We also wish to pay tribute to his predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Diogo Freitas do Amaral of Portugal, for the competence and clear-sightedness with which he conducted the proceedings of the previous session, when the United Nations was commemorating its fiftieth anniversary.

Finally, we wish to express our appreciation for the role that His Excellency Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, Secretary-General of the United Nations, has played throughout the world during his term of office to promote peace, cooperation and development. We particularly remember the important appeal for peace and national reconciliation he addressed to the people of Burundi and Africa during his visit to Bujumbura in July 1995.

Despite the crisis in my country, we believe that this message will finally be heeded by those who opted for violence to satisfy their ambitions.

As members know, the fifty-first session of the General Assembly is taking place at a time when my country, Burundi, is suffering the deepest crisis of its history. The end of the cold war certainly made it possible for the international community to free itself from the ideological shackles and other constraints imposed on it by East-West antagonisms. The United Nations has thus been able to focus on its fundamental objectives and effectively respond to some of the problems the rivalry between super-Powers had long made it impossible to solve.

However, we cannot but note, not without bitterness, that in the post-cold-war period, new, more complex conflicts have broken out, mostly within countries, that have caused serious humanitarian problems. That, unfortunately, is the case in my country. For three years, Burundi has been in the grip of widespread massacres and acts of genocide.

Since October 1993, Burundi has been increasingly mired in a tragedy from which it seems unable to escape. The consensus Government established in October 1994 in the context of implementation of the Convention on Governance of 10 September 1994, after lengthy negotiations among political parties, has been characterized by suspicion and a lack of trust at the highest echelons of State and a serious lack of will to restore peace.

The complicity of the previous administration with armed groups, massive human rights violations, duplicity at the top of the State administration and the absence of leadership have led to denunciation of the Convention on Governance and a breakdown in institutions. With a view to avoiding implosion in the face of the threat of renewed genocide, and lacking a credible alternative, the active forces of the nation requested His Excellency President Buyoya to take on the burden of responsibility of putting Burundi back on track.

The new administration has decided that its priority is to put an end to massacres and slaughter, to restore peace and security for all, to end impunity, to reintegrate displaced persons and reconstruct the country.

The government of public salvation was inaugurated on 2 August 1996. This is a broad-based team that reflects the various ethnic components and political trends. All regions of the country have been represented.

The Government wants to promote solidarity and unity to ensure the success of its transitional programme, which will last three years. Its plan of action was made public recently by the Prime Minister, His Excellency Mr. Pascal Firmin Ndimira. Its aim is to make good the commitment entered into by the Head of State to bring Burundi back to the path of peace, security and prosperity by means of dialogue and national debate.

The changes in Burundi since 25 July 1996 have been welcomed by the population of Burundi as a rescue operation. The messages of support from all quarters and the spontaneous demonstrations throughout the country were visible signs of the support of the people of Burundi for the new administration, which has come to the assistance of a country that was on the brink.

However, some countries, particularly our neighbours, were slow to realize the need, if we were to avoid genocide in Burundi and maintain the sovereignty of the country, to establish an administration that would bring people together in the quest for security, not of one ethnic group to the detriment of others, but of all.

This was therefore not an attempt to undermine democracy, as some claim. The Government wants, instead, to end the massacre of innocent populations battling with the various armed factions within the country and outside, from the capital to the heart of Burundi, to restore peace and security for all and create conditions conducive to comprehensive democratization based on national realities.

The efforts being undertaken by the new administration to restore peace and organize dialogue and national debate have been hampered by the economic sanctions against Burundi. I am duty-bound to draw the attention of representatives here to the damaging effects of the economic blockade imposed on my country at the Second Arusha Regional Summit on Burundi on 31 July 1996. The international community must not, one day, say that it did not know. The countries of our subregion were more than anyone else aware of the chaotic and complicated situation in Burundi before 25 July 1996. They also knew of the almost total institutional paralysis as a result of the crisis. Every day they see my country's continuous struggle to restore peace and security despite the host of difficulties before us.

We therefore see the embargo imposed on Burundi as unfriendly, unjust and illegal. It violates international public law and the international accords and conventions that our countries have ratified. The embargo, which is really a total economic blockade against my country, constitutes a dangerous precedent, violating Article 1, paragraph 2, of the Charter of the United Nations regarding the right of peoples to self-determination and the sovereignty and equality of States.

This blockade flouts the principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of other States as stipulated in Article III, paragraph 2, of the Charter of the Organization of African Unity and the Declaration of 24 October 1970 adopted by the General Assembly on the duty of States to refrain from interfering in the domestic affairs of other States.

The nature of the sanctions adopted flies in the face of the principle of the non-use of force and the peaceful settlement of international disputes in accordance with the Declaration of 24 October 1970 adopted by the General Assembly. We know that States are prohibited from using

force against another State, even in the case of damages caused by the latter.

In the case of Burundi, there was no damage to any of our neighbours. However, our access to the sea, our right of transit and our freedom of trade have been taken away. The illegality of the embargo is obvious, since international and regional treaties recognizing Member States' freedom of transit have been violated.

These instruments include the Marrakesh Agreement establishing the World Trade Organization, the treaty on the Common Market of Eastern and Southern Africa, the Convention on Transit Trade of Land-Locked States, not to mention the charters and agreements of neighbouring countries, such as the Economic Community of the Great Lakes Countries and the preferential trade area.

What is worse — and we would emphasize this here before the General Assembly — the sanctions imposed are hindering the action of our Government, weakening the chances for peace and working in favour of the extremist militias and armed bands, which feel encouraged by them. At this very moment, the latter are using the embargo to intensify their acts of violence and destruction in the country.

The embargo imposed on Burundi has had catastrophic consequences on people who, as a result, find themselves deprived of urgently needed medications, vaccines, diagnostic materials and surgical instruments. Today, children, women and the elderly are dying.

The vaccination rate, which, because of three years of war, has fallen from 80 per cent to 30 per cent among children under five years of age, may soon reach zero if nothing is done to improve the situation in the meantime. That will necessarily have an impact on the most vulnerable members of the population. Further, the population of Burundi is at risk of widespread famine, which will have unfortunate consequences for the inhabitants of neighbouring countries. It will have a greater impact on the most vulnerable, namely, displaced persons, the homeless and the repatriated, which latter group has already been living for three years now in inhuman conditions. Nearly 80 per cent of them are children, women and the elderly.

Lastly, owing to lack of fuel and non-availability of educational materials, a large number of pupils and students may leave school. The drop-out rate is already 18 per cent for secondary education, 21 per cent for technical training and 20 per cent for university studies.

As for the economic aspects of the embargo, I would point out that Burundi lives essentially on agriculture and animal husbandry. There will be a sharp decline in our harvest if fertilizers, concentrates and veterinary pharmaceuticals continue to be held by embargo in the ports of neighbouring countries. The result will obviously be widespread famine.

The few industries still operating are gradually shutting down owing to lack of raw materials. State revenues are at a dangerously low level because of our inability to export and import. That will lead to unemployment or inability to pay workers in both the public and private sectors and foment social unrest that will increase insecurity and destabilize the country. Overall, the situation will favour the retaking of territory and strengthen the armed actions of rebel groups and other outlaw bands against the peaceful population, with the risk of widespread civil war.

This apocalyptic prospect can and must be avoided. The neighbouring countries behind the embargo had demanded that the new regime end its suspension of the National Assembly and political parties and commit itself to dialogue with the armed groups, points that are priorities of the new regime's programme made public on 25 July 1996. Decree Number 100-023 of 13 September 1996 has just reinstated Parliament, the political parties and political associations.

Furthermore, the Government of Burundi has just reiterated its solemn commitment to engage in dialogue and to discuss all the country's fundamental questions with all interested political partners, including armed groups. We renew that commitment here before the Assembly.

That measure, which is already a priority of the new regime, was the latest recommendation of the Arusha Summit Meeting on 31 July 1996. Now that my Government has responded positively and promptly to the conditions fixed by its neighbours, we invite them to take all appropriate steps to lift the embargo immediately so as to alleviate the indescribable suffering of the people of Burundi and to enable dialogue — which is also hindered by the embargo — to take place by opening lines of communication, both on the ground and in the air, and by fulfilling their commitments.

My country, Burundi, seeks to play an active and constructive role in the development of peaceful, friendly and mutually beneficial relations with countries of the region and the rest of the world. In return, we require of our partners that they refrain from threat or use of force or from any other action incompatible with the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter.

Because of the war and the embargo, my country continues to suffer from a very critical economic situation. It is land-locked and therefore must rely on its neighbours for the transit of its exports and imports. For that reason, we attach great importance to the policy of good-neighbourliness and non-interference in the internal affairs of other States.

My Government is perfectly well aware of the concerns of the international community over the crisis in Burundi. We express our gratitude to all our bilateral and multilateral partners that have given us their support, solidarity and understanding in this difficult period.

However, we remain convinced that the imposition of conditions about the pace and the way to resolve the current conflict cannot benefit the people of Burundi. We are determined to find lasting and definitive solutions to the evil that is eroding Burundi, but such complex problems cannot be resolved by precipitate action or by holding a knife to our throats.

The political situation in the Great Lakes region continues to be cause for concern. This geographical area holds the sad world record for number of refugees. Following the genocide carried out in Rwanda in April 1994, several hundreds of thousands of persons sought asylum in neighbouring countries, particularly in Zaire and Tanzania.

Following the crisis of October 1993, those countries also contained tens of thousands of Burundi's citizens, who swelled the ranks of those gone into exile. In February 1995 an international Conference about this thorny question was held in Bujumbura, under the auspices of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees. The decisions and recommendations made at that time have remained virtually a dead letter. However, we have noted the voluntary and peaceful repatriation of a large number of Rwandan refugees who had sought asylum in Burundi.

The OAU and the United Nations, through the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, should step up their initiatives designed to encourage all persons who wish to return to their countries once the conditions of peace and security have been met. The authorities of the countries concerned must, of course, play a primary role. The Government of Burundi, for its part, is prepared to welcome at any time all of our nationals who wish to return to their respective homes. To that end, it is now organizing and doing all it can to bring about the rapid restoration of a climate of peace, understanding and national reconciliation.

We encourage all efforts being made by neighbouring countries, by friendly countries, the Organization of African Unity, the European Union and the United Nations on behalf of this troubled region and to return the situation as a whole to normal.

At the same time, we draw the attention of the international community to other scourges and other phenomena that are rife in this geographical area. I am referring to the trafficking in and proliferation of weapons and the training of militias and armed groups that foment terrorism and threaten the security of our fellow citizens from certain neighbouring countries.

We note the spread of the ideology of genocide, hatred, violence and marginalization made manifest in intolerance and ethnic fundamentalism. The pernicious ideas propagated by the champions of those ideologies will, in the long term, generate social upheavals with political and ethnic roots that will in turn cause enormous human and material damage. The genocide in Rwanda, the massacres perpetrated in Burundi since the October 1993 crisis, the killings we have witnessed in South Kivu, in particular in the Massissi region and very recently in the region of Uvira, are the best example of this threat to peace and security in our subregion.

The international community must mobilize to combat such inhuman and degrading acts, whose philosophy is so strangely reminiscent of notorious Hitlerite nazism.

With regard to the other conflicts with which Africa is beset, the Government of Burundi welcomes the positive developments in the situation in Somalia and in Liberia. It appreciates the decisive role played by the OAU, the United Nations and subregional organizations in helping to sort out differences and commit the parties to disputes to a process of peace and reconciliation.

In that connection, my Government welcomes the establishment by the OAU of a Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution. African leaders have thereby demonstrated their determination to become more involved in solving problems on their own continent.

We take this opportunity to express our thanks to the European Union, the United Nations and other bilateral partners for the political, material and financial support given that initiative. To that end, Burundi is convinced of the overriding importance of preventive diplomacy and the peaceful settlement of disputes through dialogue and negotiation.

The United Nations has two main priorities, namely, the Agenda for Peace and the Agenda for Development. Their success entails a determined struggle against terrorism and organized crime as well as the elimination of the nuclear threat. Burundi therefore supports the organization of an international criminal tribunal.

Burundi's representative to the United Nations has just signed the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. My Government warmly welcomes that noble decision by the General Assembly of our Organization. It is a signally important step towards the establishment of a world of peace free from the threat of meaningless death caused by man himself.

The Government of Burundi is also concerned about other contemporary scourges, such as the trafficking in and the distribution and consumption of drugs and other psychotropic substances. They are a grave danger, especially for our young people who are our future. Apart from their deleterious effects on health, they are a formidable weapon in the hands of the supporters of international terrorism.

For that reason, we wholeheartedly support efforts being made within the framework of international cooperation to eradicate that disaster confronting humanity. We emphasize this fact, for armed groups that are organized to rob, rape, burn and kill sate themselves with these harmful substances to kill in cold blood, without remorse and without pity.

Several delegations have recognized the fact that many African Governments are increasingly committed to shouldering their responsibilities for the development of their continent. It has been noted, in particular, that over the past two years the average growth rate in gross domestic product has reached 5 per cent. Those efforts deserve encouragement

Nevertheless, the burden of external debt continues to weigh heavily on many of our countries and often undermines their development efforts. That is why the Government of Burundi pleads for the substantial easing of external debt in order to give every chance to programmes aimed at improving the living standard of our people.

I should like to join other eminent heads of delegation who have spoken earlier in announcing that my Government shares the hope that our Organization will be reformed and made into an efficient and effective instrument better able to respond to the purposes and principles assigned it by its founding fathers. The United Nations must adapt its structures and working methods to the current and future concerns of our planet and all humankind.

We view with special attention the ongoing discussions on restructuring the Security Council to allow for more equitable representation in that body, to increase its membership and to achieve its general democratization. Given their political and economic advantages, Germany and Japan have legitimate aspirations for permanent seats in the Security Council, as does Italy. Since none of the proposals before us commands general support, it is just as legitimate to take into account the cogent suggestion put forward by Italy for a possible rotation of permanent seats among States of respective regions. We believe that Africa, Asia and Latin America should have at least two permanent seats per region in that lofty, decision-making body of the Organization.

My country, Burundi, wishes to reaffirm its total commitment to and unswerving support for the noble ideas upheld by the Organization. We hope that the United Nations will continue to move forward in the struggle against racism, intolerance, xenophobia, terrorism and child prostitution. It is our ardent desire to see this vast home of mankind promote and further promulgate the values of peace, freedom and mutual respect and fraternity among men in order to stave off for all time the spectre of war, hunger and famine in the world, through a more generous and more committed international cooperation. All countries of the world, rich and poor, small and large, are urged to join forces to meet that challenge: the challenge of building a better future in a more just, more peaceful, more human world.

The meeting rose at 1.15 p.m.